

Dear GAE Committee Members,

My name is Joel Gordes and unfortunately I will be unable to attend the Public Hearing on Monday, March 16th at 9:30 AM but I did want to provide some input for you.

I have been involved in the energy field since 1975 when I first gave testimony before this legislature. Later I served as a legislator from 1987-1991 and served on the Energy Committee as well as the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee. As some few of you may recall, we had a deficit situation at that time which was serious but probably nowhere near the magnitude we expect to experience over the next few years. Serious thought and meaningful intent must be given to meet the need of balancing this budget. Unfortunately, we have already seen the surfacing of some proposals that are indicative neither of serious thought nor meaningful intent.

Foremost of these is S.B. No. 840 An Act Concerning The Elimination Of The Office Of Consumer Counsel, The Office Of The Healthcare Advocate, The Office Of Ombudsman For Property Rights And Certain Legislative Commissions. I am intimately familiar with the Office of Consumer Council and have been for decades and can only say their elimination serves no useful public purpose and has the potential to cause irreparable harm.

First, the OCC is not even funded by taxpayer dollars but, rather by ratepayer funds, and so no savings for the deficit will be realized.

Second, without their efforts ratepayers would not be fully represented in front of the Department of Public Utility Control that rules on innumerable cases that can lead to rate increases that are not only burdensome to individuals but also harmful to local economies which generate economic activity--- as in jobs. Neither the Attorney General and/nor other agencies can match OCC's degree of expertise.

Third, the elimination of this agency is pure symbolism at its worst in a time when we need to put our best and brightest to work in developing truly creative ways in which to meet the challenges before us. If this is indicative of the best and brightest ideas we can come up with, we are in a lot more trouble than you can ever begin to imagine.

Fourth, there are better ways to reduce government spending. Let me give you one small example. You are the Government Administration and Elections Committee. One concept for government administration that I will remind you of was made by a recent, past governor who embodied it as Executive Order #30 of 29 August 2003. It mandated going from paper documents to electronic documents. Let me suggest you put it into effect immediately by not letting bill proposals such as SB 840 even making it into print in the first place. I note SB 840 is a hefty 113 pages. Before we disassemble a valuable state agency in the name of symbolism let's eliminate the true waste in that manner.

Thank you all for your time and attention in this matter.

Sincerely,
Joel N. Gordes, 38 Brookmoor Rd., West Hartford, CT 06107